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NAVY MEDICINE IN FOCUS

Navy Corpsman Balances Family and Deployment

BY PROSS – OCTOBER 29, 2013

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Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Johanna Ray records a patient's vital signs in the trauma bay at Multinational Base – Tarin Kot, Afghanistan, Aug. 19, 2013. Ray, a Navy Reservist from Milledgeville, Ga., is a field medical service technician at the Role 2 hospital.

Story and photos by Sgt. Jessi McCormick | 102nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

After talking to a recruiter for a year, Hospital Corpsman 2nd Class Johanna Ray chose to join the Navy instead of the Army because she didn't want to get dirty.

Seven years and plenty of mud later, Ray is deployed to Multinational Base – Tarin Kot, Afghanistan, as part of a coalition medical team comprised of American and Australian sailors, soldiers, and airmen.

Born in Brooklyn, N.Y., Ray moved to Georgia at age 14. She graduated from Wilkinson County High School in Irwinton, Ga., in 2003, and then attended Georgia Military College in Milledgeville, Ga., where she studied to be a paralegal assistant.

Ray has faced difficult times in the past. In high school, she gave birth to her daughter, Desmonique. She continued to study hard and juggle single parenthood and school work, never losing ground in either. It was because of her daughter that she decided to serve her country and better their future.

In June 2007, Ray reported to Naval Station Great Lakes, Ill., for boot camp.

"It was hard to leave my daughter," Ray said. "She was starting kindergarten, but I knew I had to start this journey at some

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point.”

After completing boot camp, she attended hospital corpsman school and was offered a chance to go to dental technician school. Taking up this offer, she found herself at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., where she was encouraged by her leaders to attend training at Field Medical Training Battalion (FMTB).

At first, she was hesitant of the idea. She was ready to return home to her daughter, but in the end, she completed the training.

“Going to FMTB was the best thing to happen in my career because it made me mentally and physically stronger,” Ray said. “I joined the Navy because I didn’t want to get dirty, and there I was, crawling through the dirt and mud. I realized I could do anything. It made me stronger for my daughter.”

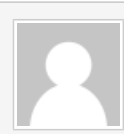
Ray arrived in Tarin Kot in April 2013. She serves as a field medical service technician and has assisted with several traumas and inpatient care.

In addition to medical roles within the Role 2 hospital, Ray has several other duties. She is the operations leading petty officer and in charge of the inventory of equipment and supplies. She is also a welfare representative, mail clerk, and leads the retrograde process of equipment and supplies.

Ray has worked to redistribute approximately \$700,000 in equipment and supplies to other bases in Afghanistan. With the closure of MNB-TK approaching, she has helped decrease the amount of equipment and storage containers by 70 percent.

“I’ve never seen her unwilling to take on extra responsibilities,” said Lt. j.g. Alex Tonsberg, a trauma nurse at the Role 2 hospital. “She’s taken the lead with retrograde, which is a vital role. She’s dedicated, patient, and willing to learn, and there’s nothing that will stop her from accomplishing something she wants to do.”

When Ray returns home, she will resume her position as assistant manager at Walmart in Milledgeville, Ga., and continue to further her military career at Naval Operations Support Center Augusta, Ga. She is looking forward to seeing Desmonique and catching up on lost time with her family.



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